

PRESS RELEASE

The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority (SSLSA) launched two Schemes titled ***“Support, Assurance, Healing, Aftercare & Rehabilitation Assistance (SAHARA) Scheme, 2026”*** under ***NALSA (Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children) Scheme, 2024*** and ***“Vichar Vimarsh Kendra (VVK)”*** under ***NALSA (JAGRITI -Justice Awareness for Grassroots Information and Transparency Initiative) Scheme, 2025*** on **1st October, 2026 (Thursday)**, in the **Auditorium** of the **Hon’ble High Court of Sikkim**, Gangtok.

The launching ceremony was held in the august presence of Hon’ble Mr Justice A Muhamed Mustaque, Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim & Patron-in-Chief, Sikkim SLSA, as the ***Chief Guest*** along with Hon’ble Mr Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, Judge, High Court of Sikkim & Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLSA, as the ***Guest of Honour***.

The programme was also attended by Registrar General, High Court of Sikkim, Legal Remembrancer-cum-Secretary, Law Department, Government of Sikkim, Registrar, High Court of Sikkim, Registrar (Judicial), High Court of Sikkim, Central Project Coordinator, e-Courts Project High Court of Sikkim, Director, Sikkim Judicial Academy, Deputy Director, Sikkim Judicial Academy, Resource Persons Smt Parvathy Menon, Advocate, Project Coordinator of the Victim Rights Centre (VRC), Kerela, Ms Karthika Sukumaran, Advocate, High Court of Kerela and Dr Bindu John, Psychologist and expert consultant for Kerala SLSA projects, Special Guests, Ms Sandhya Rachel Geroge, Advocate, Ms Sandhya J, Advocate and Mr Anant Asthana, Advocate and Child Rights Activist, Senior Advocates, Pro-Bono Lawyers, District Child Protection Officers, representatives from Freedom Facility Rehabilitation Centre and Serenity Home, students from Sikkim Government Law College, ICFAI University, Sikkim National Law University and Sikkim University, PLVs, Trained Mediators and Advocates from BAR Association

The SAHARA scheme was formulated to establish a continuum of care for the victims, from reporting of the offence through institutional care, rehabilitation, transition to adulthood and aftercare, by streamlining the existing initiatives of Sikkim SLSA, and ensuring coordinated assistance through convergence with the Departments and statutory authorities concerned. The primary objective of the Scheme is to ensure that every child, victim, survivor of a sexual offence has access to timely and appropriate legal, medical, psychological, educational, rehabilitative and livelihood assistance, in accordance with the best interests of the child.

Whereas, the scheme of VVK was envisaged to provide accessible and professional counseling services to children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, victims of violence and abuse, litigants and other vulnerable persons requiring assistance. The Centre will provide individual, family and legal counselling, crisis intervention and online/video counselling, with access through a dedicated helpline, walk-in facility and referrals from courts, police, NGOs and other institutions.

After the launching ceremony of the above-mentioned two schemes, the Hon’ble the Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim and & Patron-in-Chief, Sikkim SLSA, informed the gathering regarding the Victim Rights Centre in Kerela, which was conceived by the Kerala High Court Legal Services Committee during 2021 (*wherein His Lordship was the Chairman of the Kerela High Court Legal Services Committee*). The Centre acted as a platform ensuring access to justice, counseling, and legal support for victims of crimes (particularly sexual assault and child abuse cases). The centre became one of the flagship projects of the Kerala Legal Services Authority.

His Lordship also informed that even though the society in Sikkim upholds its traditions and values, however, there are an alarming number of POCSO and drug abuse cases, which requires serious attention. In view of the such cases the two scheme have been formulated in order to assure such victims that there is someone to take care of them as a handholding measure and wished the schemes all the best.

Thereafter, a Consultative Programme on Child Protection, Healing and Rehabilitation was held with Resource Persons, Smt Parvathy Menon, Advocate, Project Coordinator of the Victim Rights Centre (VRC), Kerela, Ms Karthika Sukumaran, Advocate, High Court of Kerela and Dr Bindu John, Psychologist and expert consultant for Kerala SLSA projects, who deliberated on Orientation and Sensitization on the SAHARA Scheme, 2026, Orientation and Sensitization on the Vichar Vimarsh Kendra (VVK) and Demystifying counselling through shared insights, respectively.

The programme was followed by a vibrant interactive session between the participants and the Resource Persons and numerous queries raised were addressed by the Resource Persons.